

DECISION NOTICE
WEST FORK CRAMER CREEK CHANNEL REACTIVATION PROJECT

Prepared by
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
September 29, 2008

I. Proposal

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to provide partial funding through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program to a project calling for the reactivation and restoration of approximately 1,500 feet of the West Fork Cramer Creek.

II. Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)

MEPA required FWP to assess the potential consequences of the proposed action for the human and natural environment. The proposal was detailed in an Environmental Assessment (EA) released by FWP August 26, 2008. The 30-day comment period for this EA ended September 26, 2008.

Issues raised during the public comment period for this EA are addressed in the Comments section of this Decision Notice. The Draft EA and Decision Notice will serve as the final document.

III. Summary of Public Comment

Two written comments were received in response to the draft EA. No other comments were received. Comments received brought up the following issues:

The document as available online fails to provide several critical facts of the project including:

1. Genetic integrity of the westslope cutthroat trout inhabiting Cramer Creek.

Response: The genetic integrity of westslope cutthroat trout in Cramer Creek is unknown. Since the proposed project falls entirely upstream of a physical barrier that completely blocks upstream fish passage, the project proposal will have no effect on existing population genetics. Funding through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program prioritizes projects that benefit native fish, with earmarked dollars directed towards projects that benefit cutthroat trout and bull trout. The decision made by the Future Fisheries citizen panel and the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission to fund this project on Cramer Creek did not affect funding decisions on other potential projects that involved populations of non-introgressed westslope cutthroat trout.

2. Graphics showing the relationship of the West Fork of Cramer Creek to the remainder of the stream.

Response: Attached to this Decision Notice is a map of the Cramer Creek drainage.

3. Flow volumes in the existing combined section of West Fork of Cramer Creek and Cramer Creek proper.

Response: Flow rates for West Fork Cramer and Cramer creeks have not been specifically measured, but both are perennial. Late summer observations estimated Cramer Creek was flowing about 10 cubic feet per second (CFS) and West Fork Cramer Creek was flowing about 1 to 2 CFS. The abandoned historic channel of West Fork Cramer Creek typically is dry. The proposal calls for returning the West Fork Cramer Creek to its existing original channel. Any potential habitat lost from an estimated 10 to 20% reduced flow in the affected reach of Cramer Creek due to returning the West Fork back to its original channel would be more than offset by the habitat gains from re-watering the historic West Fork channel.

4. Anticipated flow volumes in the West Fork Cramer Creek and Cramer Creek proper upon completion of the project.

Response: Based on flow observations outlined in the response to issue # 3, late summer flow would be between 1 and 2 CFS in the restored reach of the West Fork Cramer Creek and 8 to 9 CFS in the affected reach of Cramer Creek.

5. Stream channel dimensions of the existing and proposed post construction conditions of West Fork Cramer Creek and mainstem Cramer.

Response: The applicant is in the process of providing FWP a more detailed design that will include dimensions, pattern and profile of the restored reach of the West Fork Cramer Creek. A hydrologist and a professional engineer that currently sit as members of the Future Fisheries citizen panel will review these design details. Funding is contingent upon design approval by these two professionals. The dimension, pattern and profile on the main stem Cramer Creek will not be altered. Natural channel dimensions, pattern and profile of the historic reach of the West Fork of Cramer Creek remain in place and are to be followed to the extent possible.

6. Any provisions in the project to protect newly constructed channel segments from any potential livestock impacts that may exist.

Response: The property in question is no longer in agricultural use. The property is used as a retreat for troubled youth.

7. The presence or absence of downstream diversions that might influence down migrant fish survival.

Response: The Water Resources Survey compiled for Missoula County by the State Engineers Office shows two irrigation ditches coming off of Cramer Creek downstream of the proposed project site. It is unknown if these two ditches

remain active and, if so, whether they adversely affect migration of westslope cutthroat trout in the Cramer Creek drainage.

The State Historical Preservation Office recommends that a cultural resources inventory be conducted in order to determine whether or not sites exist and if they will be impacted.

Response: Agreed.

IV. Modifications to the Environmental Assessment

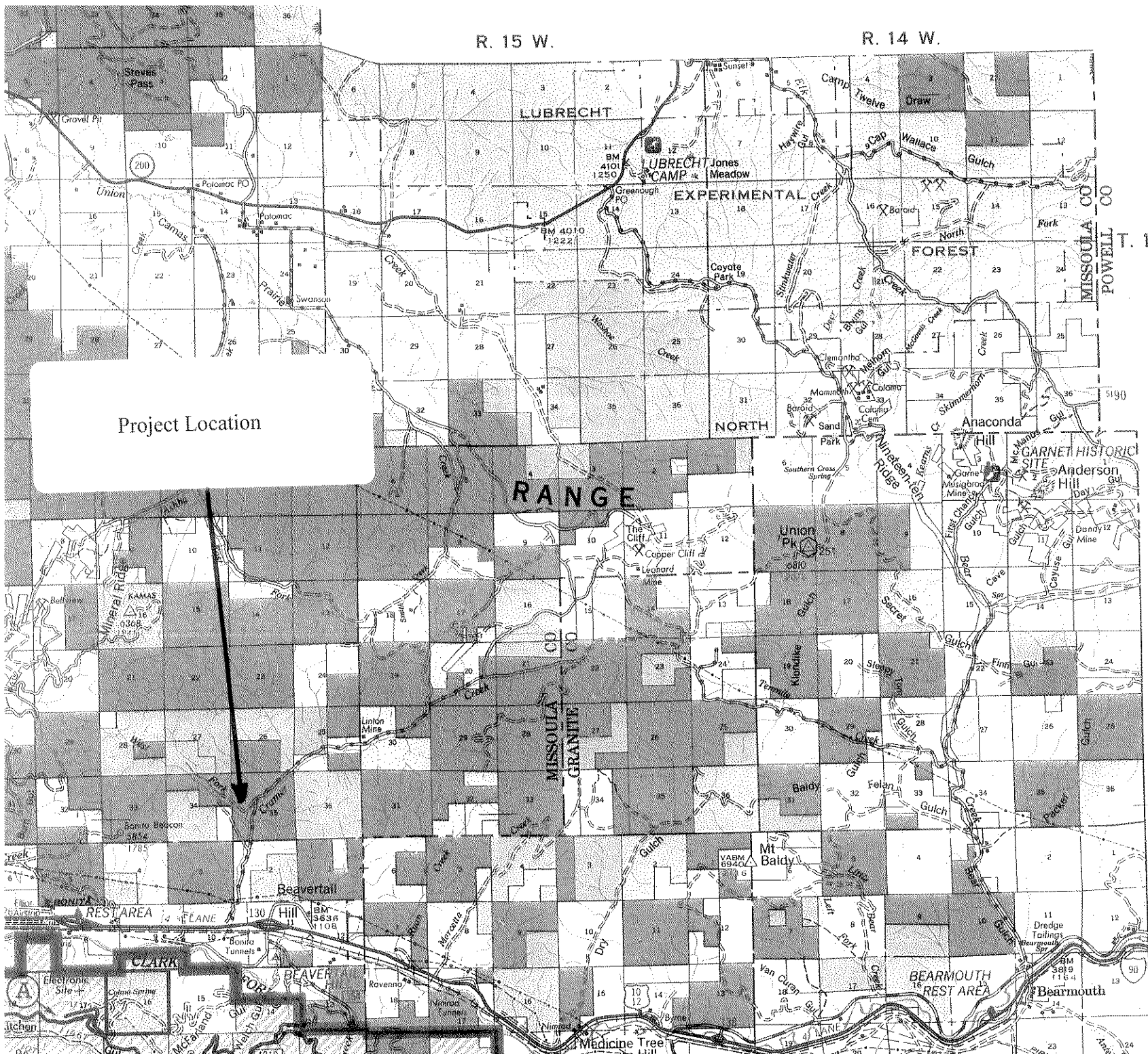
A map showing the entire Cramer Creek drainage has been added.

V. Decision

After review of the proposal, it is my decision to proceed with funding through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program for the West Fork Cramer Creek Channel Reactivation Project. The action will benefit the fishery in the Cramer Creek drainage.

I find there to be no significant impacts associated with this action and conclude that an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. The completed EA and the Decision Notice provide an adequate level of analysis.

Chris Hunter, Administrator
Fisheries Division



R. 15 W.

R. 14 W.

T. 13 N.

T. 12 N.

T. 11 N.

Project Location

11

45'